

God Will Keep His Word — Always!

Text: Revelation 14.14–21

Theme: God will always keep His word to the righteous and the wicked

Introduction — What will you do between this very moment and judgment day?

- Antonio James was just a teenager and had compiled quite a criminal record
- around 20-years of age, he was charged with a murder in New Orleans
- sentenced to death, he would spend the next 14 years waiting for execution on death row
- however, during that time, the gospel came to Antonio for the first time
- he was delightfully converted to Christ & spent his remaining time reading Bible to others
- he led several Bible studies during those years as well
- when the day of his execution arrived, he asked the victim's family members for forgiveness
- Burl Cain, the warden of Angola prison, also a Christian, spoke final words to Antonio
- “Antonio, the chariot is here; get ready for the ride. Here we go; you are about to see Jesus”
- after Antonio was pronounced dead, the warden spoke to those gathered there
- “We have sent Antonio James to his final judgment.”

What will you do between now and judgment day?

- Revelation 14.14–21 tells us the earth will indeed be harvested
- the actions we have sown bear fruit

God will always keep His word to His righteous ones in Christ & to the wicked

- John sees this happening by way of the imagery of a great harvest
- especially fitting, at least for us, as we look all around us and see our own harvest beginning
- John is given to see the Harvester, the grain harvest of the earth, and the grape harvest too

Let's take a look at...

I. THE HARVESTER

- v. 14 describes this harvester to us
- there really can't be any doubt about who this is
- it surprised me that several simply said it is an angel
- but we've seen this “one like a son of man” before

1. The white cloud

- this could serve the function like a chariot
- this isn't a cloud like we see in the sky today
- rather, this cloud has great theological significance

1) a cloud of glory

- when Jesus ascended to the Father, He did so thru the clouds
- *“And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.”*

(Acts 1:9 ESV)

- it is like the cloud that filled Solomon's temple when dedicated
- *“And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord,”*

(1 Kings 8:10 ESV)

- a cloud surrounded our Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration
- *He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”*

(Matthew 17:5 ESV)

- it often called the *shekinah* cloud — the cloud of God’s glory
- no, this cloud is very familiar to Jesus’ followers
- *“Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”*

(Matthew 24:30 ESV)

2) a royal chariot

- Christ is coming again, with all power and glory
- when He returns it will not be the humble carpenter, despised and rejected of men
- no, He will be seated upon a cloud of glory
- *“He is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.”*

(Acts 10:42 ESV)

2. The Son of Man

- John has already seen Jesus in this manner
- *“and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.”*

(Revelation 1:13 ESV)

- it is one of the most frequent titles for Jesus in the Gospel accounts: 80x
- out of those 80 occurrences, 79 came from Jesus’ own mouth
- no, there is no doubt who this One in Rev. 14 is at all
- John would not be mistaken about this
- after all, he knew Jesus full well as that “beloved disciple”
- in the Upper Room, he reclined his head upon Jesus, in a deep sign of devotion
- the difference now is Christ is high and lifted up, highly exalted, coming in power
- Daniel’s prophecy is come
- *“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.”*

(Daniel 7:13 ESV)

3. A golden crown

- there are two crowns describe in the New Testament
- one is a diadem, worn by kings and rulers
- and surely this is Jesus
- but here, He wears a crown described by a second word
- this crown is given to the victors in the Olympic Games in ancient Greece
- as Jesus returns, He wears the victor’s wreath, made of imperishable gold
- He is coming as the One who conquered sin, death, and Satan
- He is coming as the One who has succeeded in all He set out to do
- He is coming as the One who triumphed on the cross over principalities and power

4. A sharp sickle

- harvest is quite poignant for us today
- we see the combines in the fields reaping what was sown last spring
- oh, what technology has done to aid in this process
- but it was once all done by hand with a sickle
- John was given to see something of great significance here
- Jesus is coming and He has work to do

1) time for gathering

- Jesus told the parable of the wheat and the tares
- Jesus is seen here, coming for His wheat, His followers, faithful to the very end
- but the tares, the wicked, will be separated out and burned in judgment

2) are you ready to meet the living Christ?

- if you know Jesus by God's magnificent grace, this very thought excites you
- it fills you with hope, courage, enduring strength
- but if you do not know Jesus, do not give yourself false comfort
- yes, Jesus is gentle, tender, and loving
- but it is precisely because He is this that His fierce anger and wrath will also be shown
- this is what many will face: the Risen Lord Jesus as Judge
- it will be an awful and frightful prospect
- yet it will be just, fair, and deserved by every single one
- why would you wait?
- why would you take the risk that you might escape even today if you do not know Him?
- as you have heard me quote from Scripture so often
- do not harden your heart; today is the day of salvation
- come to Jesus while you can

Well, that's the One who comes to harvest; let's see...

II. THE GRAIN HARVEST OF THE EARTH

- Revelation 14.13 gave us a marvelous benediction, a pronouncement of blessing
- *And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"*
- what John gives us in the description of two harvests is just as powerful
- both these images tell us God is faithful to keep His promises
- He has promised to ultimately save all who are His in Christ Jesus
- He has sealed them, kept them, even in martyrdom, they are close to Him
- but He has also promised judgment to all who reject Him
- to all live out their desires in this world, He will face them & they will not enjoy it

1. The grain

- I believe this is a harvest of the righteous
- there are two harvests depicted here; why picture two if they are the same harvest?
- those referred to in the second harvest as grapes are clearly the unrighteous
- I believe this harvest in vv. 14–16 is different, that of Christ's followers
- remember: the 144,000 are described as "first fruits" earlier in v. 4
- plus, it appears that Jesus is harvesting the grain
- but it is yet another angel using the sickle of the wicked, v. 19
- add to that that this matches the judgment of the righteous whose names are in Book of Life
- there, the righteous are judged based upon where their names have been written
- then, the following judgment is against all those whose names are not there!

2. How's your grain?

- Jesus Christ will come on the clouds of glory when the harvest is ripe
- 2 Peter 3.11–12 asks a pertinent question

- *“Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!”*

(2 Peter 3:11–12 ESV)

- this looks like a life of godliness and holiness
- are you pursuing this kind of life in Christ Jesus?
- this is the only opportunity we will have to live for that day
- today is the day of salvation
- will you lose your life today so that tomorrow, when Jesus comes, you’ll not lose it then?
- God always keeps His word
- He will save and He will judge — this is the harvest of the earth

That’s one harvest, but there is also...

III. THE GRAPE HARVEST OF THE EARTH

- God promises salvation to all who believe in Jesus Christ
- but He also promises judgment to all who refuse to acknowledge Jesus as Lord
- and God always keeps His Word
- it is this judgment that is terrible, full of righteous vengeance
- this is the harvest given to John in vv. 17–20
- two angels come out from the presence of God, the temple in heaven
- one carries the sickle, the other bears the pronouncement of judgment
- this harvest is of the grapes of the earth

1. The grapes

- these are those who reject Christ, that is very clear
- those in Christ Jesus are safe from the wrath of Almighty God
- Jesus drank that cup to the dregs when He hung on that cross
- but for those who refuse the offer of the gospel, oh, I shudder to think of it
- they will have to drink of that cup themselves
- the angel with the sickle has probably given rise to images of the grim reaper
- frightening, indeed, is this image: death is coming, eternal death with no relief
- all of ch. 14 tells the reality of this
- but all the images man has come up with a grim reaper will pale to God Himself
- He is absolutely pure
- He is altogether righteous
- He is unfailing in His goodness
- He is absolutely truthful
- and He is overwhelming in the power and force of His rightness
- if you flee from His presence, you will be cut off by the sickle of God’s justice & wrath
- if you give yourself over to the beast’s deception, you will face a harvest
- you will have sown to your sinful flesh
- and you will reap a harvest of rotten, stinking, worthless fruit
- you will have fertilized with Netflix or worse
- the water of worldliness will feed your life
- and you will hope you can hide your sin from the light of Christ
- but if you do not trust Jesus wholly, you will be cut off from the true vine
- if you do not trust Jesus and repent of your sins, you will be gathered up & thrown in the fire

2. The only hope

- the only refuge from seeing this wrath come upon you is Jesus Christ
- He died on the cross so God can justly show mercy to sinners
- when you come to Him now, all your sins are forgiven
- God's justice was poured out upon Jesus instead of you
- Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners
- could there be better news?
- Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved
- you cannot find a better gospel
- won't you believe this one?
- won't you receive Him, believe upon His name, be saved from this awful wrath of God

Conclusion – Harvest is coming

- all around us, we have seen the signs of our literal harvest of corn and beans
- the green turns to yellow, then brown
- the ears of corn, the bean pods, all drop
- the farmers look out and know: now is the time

God keeps giving us signs of His Son's return

- Revelation 6–14 have told us this so far
- since Jesus' ascension, we have seen the gospel go out
- and we have seen God's people suffering for the Name
- even now, we see the rise of wickedness and immorality like we've never seen before
- is it harvest time? Is the reaper coming?

God always keeps His word

- He never breaks a promise
- if you are His in Christ Jesus, He has promised eternal life — He will save you forever
- if you are not, if you refuse Him, He has promised judgment
- that harvest will be so sadly and awesomely plentiful, the blood will be high and deep
- the deceptive power of sin the beast & his false prophet spew forth will doom you
- no fruit will have been born by those who do not come to Jesus
- the display of God's wrath will be mind-boggling

What will you do between now and judgment day?